

REMARKS

A request for a Continuation Application under 37 CFR 1.53(b) is being filed concurrently herewith.

The specification has been amended to refer to the parent application. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended, claims 4-8 have been cancelled, and new claims 9-13 have been added. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the original claims and other claims in this application and other applications.

In the parent application, claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Ananda (U.S. 6,385,731). Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

A problem with conventional virtual metering is that customers, i.e., mailers, using a virtual postage metering system to evidence postage on mail have to obtain a meter license for a meter account with a dedicated origin zip code. This meant the mailer had to go through a registration process with the United States Post Office (USPS) and wait for approval from the USPS for a meter license before the mailer was allowed to print postage obtained over the Internet. This delay, due to the mailer having to wait for approval for a meter license from the USPS before being able to print postage from a PC, can act as a deterrent to mailers to utilize PC postage. (Specification, page 3, line 31 to page 4, line 4; page 5, lines 22-24).

The present invention alleviates the problems of the prior art by providing a system and method that allows instant metering of online postage. In accordance with the present invention, a mailer can print postage on a PC printer without having a meter license or meter account. In one embodiment, a meter account is licensed to a meter vendor (and not the individual mailer) for dispensing postage to customers from a plurality of origin zip codes. A vendor meter account 50 is located at a remote Data Center 30 controlled, for example, by the postage meter vendor. The meter

account 50, which is assigned to the postage meter vendor, dispenses postage payment evidence to a plurality of customers 25. (Page 8, lines 15-20).

In view of the above, claim 1 recites a method for dispensing postage in response to a transaction request received by a postage vendor over the Internet from a customer that comprises the steps of "obtaining a meter license from the Post, said meter license being associated with a meter account assigned to the postage vendor; receiving information from the customer, said information corresponding to the transaction requested and payment method; processing the requested transaction by creating evidence of postage payment and effecting payment for the transaction based on the information received from the customer; accounting for the created evidence of postage payment in the meter account assigned to the postage meter vendor; and sending the evidence of postage payment to the customer." Thus, a mailer can print postage without having a meter license or meter account assigned to the mailer, but instead utilizes a meter account assigned to the postage meter vendor.

In Ananda, in contrast, a user computer and a user printer, electronically connected to a PSD server and a USPS computer, constitute an on-line electronic postage meter. Fig. 18 of Ananda describes a user registration process. As detailed in Col. 27, lines 23-39, before a user can use the secure on-line metering system, the user needs to obtain a license from the USPS. In step 1802, the user obtains a license from an authorized issuer. For example, local post offices can get authorized by the USPS to issue licenses to on-line postage metering system users. In another embodiment, a license applicant is required to submit an electronic license application containing his biographical information and financial information to PSD vender system 1210. USPS interface module 1312 in PSD vendor system 1210 then forwards the electronic application to USPS system 1220 for approval/rejection. When the license application is approved, user licensing module 1303 generates a license number for the user and adds the user license number to the licensee list in the database system 1213.

Thus, In Ananda the meter is licensed by the post to the customer and associated with a meter account assigned to the customer. This is in direct contrast with the present invention, in which a customer can print postage without having a meter license or meter account assigned to the customer, but instead utilizes a meter account assigned to the postage meter vendor.

There is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Ananda of a "meter license being associated with a meter account assigned to the postage meter vendor" as is recited in claim 1. Furthermore, there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Ananda of dispensing postage in response to a transaction request received by a postage meter vendor over the Internet from a customer that includes "processing the requested transaction by creating evidence of postage payment" and "accounting for the created evidence of postage payment in the meter account assigned to the postage meter vendor" as is recited in claim 1.

For at least the above reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is allowable over the prior art of record. Claims 2, 3 and 9, dependent upon claim 1, are allowable along with claim 1 and on their own merits.

New claim 10 includes limitations substantially similar to claim 1, namely, "accounting for the created evidence of postage payment in a postal account assigned to the postage vendor." For the same reasons given with respect to claim 1 above, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 10 is allowable over the prior art of record. Claims 11-13, dependent upon claim 10, are allowable along with claim 10 and on their own merits.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this case are in a condition for allowance and favorable action thereon is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. Lemm", is written over a horizontal line.

Brian A. Lemm

Reg. No. 43,748

Attorney for Applicants

Telephone (203) 924-3836

PITNEY BOWES INC.
Intellectual Property and
Technology Law Department
35 Waterview Drive
P.O. Box 3000
Shelton, CT 06484-8000